

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS FOR

8

PROGRAM NOTES, REVIEWS, AND INTERVIEWS

In the following two examples, we show how a student improved an initial draft of program notes by revising in response to the instructor’s suggestions.

Example of Student Program Notes	
<p>Program Notes: Draft #1</p> <p><i>L’escalier de diable</i>, the “Devil’s Staircase,” features a violent, rhythmic, eighth-note driven pulse that moves up and down the keyboard, starting low and reaching the piano’s highest register. The constant upward motion of this piece has been said to represent the futility of trying to escape from Hell on the Devil’s own staircase. Composed in 1993, Ligeti used his experience of the disasters that occurred during his stay in Santa Monica, California in 1993 (horrible weather conditions), and reflects on those feelings in the piece. The driving eighth notes are reminiscent of the <u>toccata style</u> and the piece is in a <u>12/8 meter</u>. The complex harmonies twist and turn as the strong irregular accents between both hands propel the piece. The dynamics overstep the boundaries of the norm, ranging from <i>pppp</i> all the way to <i>ffffff</i>. The middle section of the etude greatly contrasts with the first, replacing the continuous eighth notes with dissonant, agonizing chords that turn into an impression of <u>bells ringing</u>, like a sinister welcoming from the Devil himself. The title “The Devil’s Staircase” also alludes to both the impossible staircase paintings of M. C. Escher, and to a mathematical function—Cantor function—also known as the “devil’s staircase.”</p> <p>201 words</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Need name of composer here. 2. This sentence needs more explanation. What disasters? What feelings? 3. “Toccatà style” and “12/8 meter” need more context or explanation. 4. Excellent musical description and listening cues! 5. Doesn’t Ligeti say something about bells in the score? Mention that. 6. This information needs attribution. What is the source? 7. Ends abruptly and is quite short of the 300-word limit.

Example of Revised Student Program Notes

Program Notes: Revised Draft #2

L'escalier de diable (The “Devil’s Staircase”), by Hungarian composer György Ligeti (1923–2006), features a violent, rhythmic, perpetual-motion pulse that moves up and down the keyboard, starting low and reaching the piano’s highest register. The constant upward motion of this piece has been said to represent the futility of trying to escape from hell on the devil’s own staircase. This piece was composed in 1993 and comes from a collection of 18 concert etudes, all with programmatic titles. For this etude, Ligeti was inspired by a disastrous storm that occurred during his 1993 stay in Santa Monica, California.

According to pianist Máire Carroll, the spectacular storm gave Ligeti “a vision of endless climbing.” The constant rhythmic motion of the etude is reminiscent of the toccata style of earlier keyboard composers such as Frescobaldi, Buxtehude, and J. S. Bach. The complex harmonies twist and turn as strong accents between both hands propel the piece. The dynamics overstep the boundaries of the norm, ranging from *pppp* all the way to *fffff*. The middle section of the etude greatly contrasts with the first, replacing the continuous eighth notes with dissonant, agonizing chords. Ligeti indicates in the score that these chords should sound like bells ringing, suggesting a sinister welcoming from the devil himself. According to Richard Steinitz, author of *György Ligeti: Music of the Imagination*, the title “The Devil’s Staircase” alludes to both the impossible staircase paintings of M. C. Escher and to the Cantor function—a mathematical phenomenon also known as “the devil’s staircase.” Both the Escher paintings and Cantor function graphs create endless, looping repetitions of stair steps. Pianist Greg Anderson, whose YouTube performance of the piece has been viewed over 600,000 times, sums up the effect of the piece simply and succinctly: “Imagine: You are in hell, and you want out.”

299 words

1. Adds the name, nationality, and dates of the composer. Also replaces “eighth-note driven” with “perpetual motion” for broader audience comprehension.

2. Clarifies the “horrible weather” that inspired the piece.

3. Explains “toccata style” and cuts the reference to meter because the term will not be meaningful to most of the audience.

4. Adds a reference to Ligeti’s score indication.

5. Attributes the information here to the original author and source.

6. Adds concluding statement to sum up the ideas presented above. Ends with a memorable quotation.

7. Meets the 300-word limit almost exactly!